

**North America's Superhighway Coalition
Testimony for U.S. Senate Commerce Committee
hosted by Senator John Ashcroft/Union Pacific
June 19, 1999
Kansas City, Missouri**

Good Morning, Senators Ashcroft and McCain and all esteemed guests. I am Tiffany Newsom, Executive Director of North America's Superhighway Coalition, Inc. (NASCO). I appreciate the opportunity to stand before you today to tell you about our coalition and this incredible trade and transportation corridor which encompasses I-35, I-29 and I-94.

NASCO is a non-profit, public/private corporation founded in 1994 whose membership has grown to include representatives from Missouri, Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Canada and Mexico. NASCO moved its headquarters to Kansas City, Missouri last year because of the city's central geographic location and to take advantage of international trade and transportation opportunities here.

Originally, NASCO's main focus was to create some type of International Trade Corridor category in the ISTEA Reauthorization. With the passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, we accomplished that goal. Two new categories were created - the National Corridor Planning and Development program and the Border Infrastructure program - and those categories (combined) received \$700 million in funding over the next five years.

Now, our mission is to maximize economic opportunity and investment along the North American international trade corridor by promoting the I-35/I-29/I-94 Corridor as a seamless, efficient intermodal trade and transportation system. In other words, we want as much of the \$700 million as possible to go towards infrastructure and technology improvements along this critical corridor - a large portion of which is located in Missouri and Kansas.

As we stand together today at this facility it is critical that a cooperative effort continues to build and promote this corridor for the

benefit of all. NASCO is a leader in this effort. Statistics indicate that unprecedented growth is continuing because of NAFTA and the general strength of our economy. The States of Missouri and Kansas are beneficiaries of this growth.

In 1997, the value of Missouri exports to Mexico grew by more than 19 percent compared to the previous year. Missouri's exports to Canada rose by 31.5 percent. Since 1994, Missouri's exports to NAFTA partners has increased 92.6 percent overall.

Today, Canada and Mexico are Missouri's leading and second-leading export markets, accounting for 53.5 percent of Missouri's total exports to the world.

In Missouri, approximately 57,900 people held jobs related to North American exports in 1996. In the year 2000, the number of people with export-related jobs is expected to reach almost 67,000.

In 1996, an estimated 33,821 Kansans had jobs that were directly tied to export trade with Canada and Mexico. In 2000, that number is expected to grow to more than 38,000.

Statistics like these are why NASCO is working so hard to build and promote North America's premier trade and transportation corridor. NASCO is involved with numerous major initiatives.

NASCO and a group of eight states (including Missouri and Kansas), the Canadian province of Manitoba and numerous private entities are now enjoying some of the success we've worked so hard to achieve. Last month the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that a project application facilitated by NASCO and submitted by the Missouri Department of Transportation would receive \$800,000 in Federal funding. This project... a one million dollar study involving

Intelligent Transportation Systems/Commercial Vehicle Operations... will examine ways to apply and harmonize cutting edge technology to improve the flow of people and goods along I-35, I-29 and I-94 from Laredo, Texas to our northern borders in Detroit and Pembina, North Dakota. NASCO strongly supports increased Federal funding for implementing ITS technology - turning the corridor into a smart highway will increase safety and efficiency. Implementation of ITS items including ramp metering, HOV lanes, Traffic Operations Centers, etc. will help to partially alleviate congestion problems when adding lane capacity isn't feasible. Truck tracking while the transport vehicle is moving will also help minimize congestion at checkpoints.

It is important to note that this study will focus on ways that transportation technology can be harmonized corridor-wide so that international trade processing centers and intermodal systems in (for example) Kansas City can easily interface with systems that will be online in Dallas, Winnipeg and Monterrey, Mexico. It is also critical that data for import and export movement be harmonized so that governments, carriers and businesses alike can be assured that commodities are moving efficiently while maintaining a high level of security.

This is why NASCO supports the full funding of International Trade Data Systems (ITDS), the only system that truly promises to reduce the time and effort it takes to get products to international markets safely and efficiently. NASCO urges Congress to fully fund and support ITDS.

ITDS is a U.S. Government information technology initiative creating an integrated government-wide system of electronic collection, use and dissemination of international trade data. ITDS seeks to reduce cost and burden, enhance enforcement and compliance and improve the quality of international trade data. These goals can be

achieved through standardization of commercial-based data, elimination of redundant and confusing processing, improvement of risk assessment, more convenient access to requirements information, improved data editing and validation, and creating an integrated electronic environment. NASCO supports the use of ITDS technology at all international border crossings and at future inland international trade processing centers. Delays at the border or at the processing center for clearance of goods and customs will be drastically reduced, as processing can be done while trucks and trains are moving. NASCO advocates development of a plan for ITPCs in each country - in the U.S., plans for international trade processing centers in Kansas City, San Antonio, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Oklahoma City, and Des Moines are at various stages of development. These centers will utilize an intermodal approach that takes advantage of rail, air and highway facilities to move people, vehicles and goods more efficiently than ever before.

NASCO supports making transportation infrastructure and technology improvements through environmentally sustainable policies.

We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Postal Service to develop an environmentally-conscious clean corridor and explore the potential use of alternative fuels.

To summarize, NASCO is working to ensure that this transportation and trade corridor is improved in a way that suits those who use it as well as those who live on it. The coalition urges Congress to increase funding for the National Corridor Planning and Development and Coordinated Border Infrastructure programs when the next Federal transportation bill is crafted in 2004.

The increasing amount of trade between the United States, Canada and Mexico is great for the economy. Businesses are growing and creating thousands of new, good jobs.

But the increase in export/import traffic is placing our infrastructure under increasing stress. Highways, bridges, rail hubs, airports and other facilities require expansion and increased maintenance.

The I-35/I-29/I-94 Trade Corridor is the **only existing main, central** artery that connects all of the NAFTA partners. No other Trade Corridor Route can boast the prime routing and strategically-located terminus points that the I-35/I-29/I-94 Corridor can. It connects to all major east/west interstate routes in the U.S. We must do all we can to promote the efficient use of this corridor.

It is a proven fact that highway construction and other types of transportation development boost local economies and create new, good jobs.

An aggressive approach to planning and coordinating corridor improvements is needed. North America's Superhighway has a strong coalition of forward-looking leaders behind it working for these improvements.

The economy is good now. But to keep the economy moving in the right direction, markets must be grown. Just as important is making sure that commodities can get to those markets safely and efficiently. NASCO exists to convince government and business leaders at the highest levels that the I-35/I-29/I-94 corridor is this country's transportation backbone.

I want to thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

